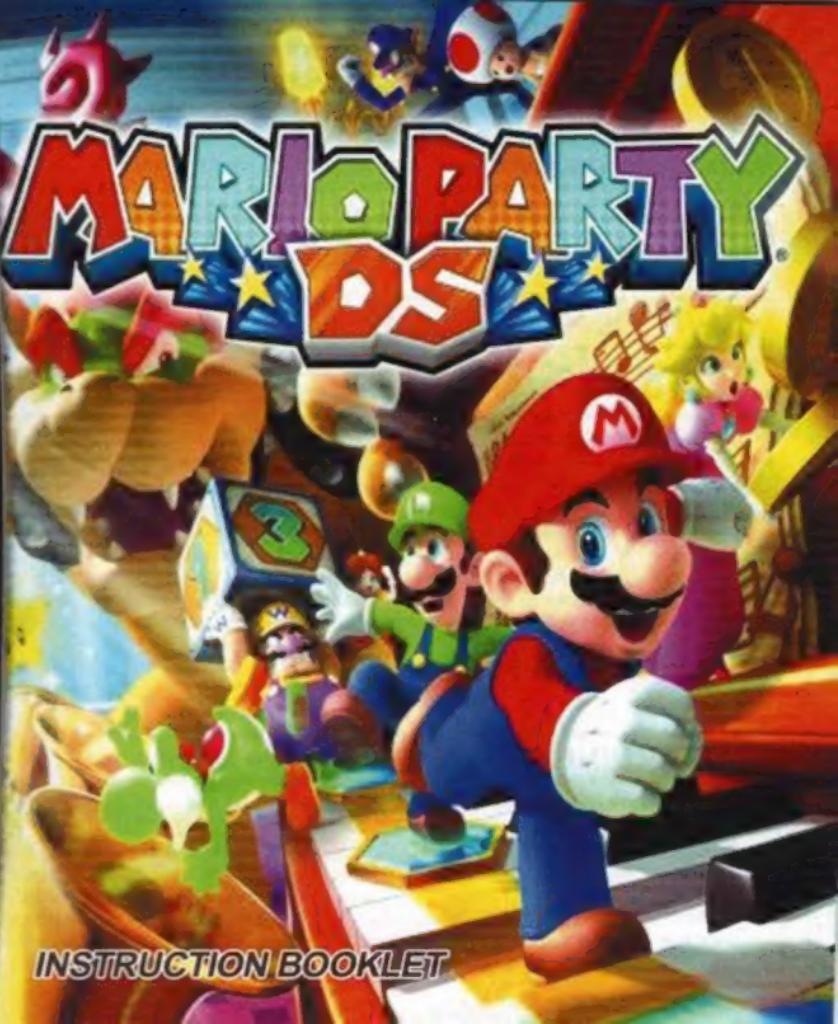


NINTENDO DS™



PLEASE CAREFULLY READ THE SEPARATE HEALTH AND SAFETY PRECAUTIONS BOOKLET INCLUDED WITH THIS PRODUCT BEFORE USING YOUR NINTENDO® HARDWARE SYSTEM, GAME CARD OR ACCESSORY. THIS BOOKLET CONTAINS IMPORTANT HEALTH AND SAFETY INFORMATION.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION: READ THE FOLLOWING WARNINGS BEFORE YOU OR YOUR CHILD PLAY VIDEO GAMES.

⚠ WARNING - Seizures

- Some people (about 1 in 4000) may have seizures or blackouts triggered by light flashes or patterns, such as while watching TV or playing video games, even if they have never had a seizure before.
- Anyone who has had a seizure, loss of awareness, or other symptom linked to an epileptic condition should consult a doctor before playing a video game.
- Parents should watch when their children play video games. Stop playing and consult a doctor if you or your child have any of the following symptoms:

**Convulsions
Altered vision**

**Eye or muscle twitching
Involuntary movements**

**Loss of awareness
Disorientation**

- To reduce the likelihood of a seizure when playing video games:
 1. Sit or stand as far from the screen as possible.
 2. Play video games on the smallest available television screen.
 3. Do not play if you are tired or need sleep.
 4. Play in a well-lit room.
 5. Take a 10 to 15 minute break every hour.

⚠ WARNING - Radio Frequency Interference

The Nintendo DS can emit radio waves that can affect the operation of nearby electronics, including cardiac pacemakers.

- Do not operate the Nintendo DS within 9 inches of a pacemaker while using the wireless feature.
- If you have a pacemaker or other implanted medical device, do not use the wireless feature of the Nintendo DS without first consulting your doctor or the manufacturer of your medical device.
- Observe and follow all regulations and rules regarding use of wireless devices in locations such as hospitals, airports, and on board aircraft. Operation in those locations may interfere with or cause malfunctions of equipment, with resulting injuries to persons or damage to property.

⚠ WARNING - Repetitive Motion Injuries and Eyestrain

Playing video games can make your muscles, joints, skin or eyes hurt after a few hours. Follow these instructions to avoid problems such as tendinitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, skin irritation or eyestrain:

- Avoid excessive play. It is recommended that parents monitor their children for appropriate play.
- Take a 10 to 15 minute break every hour, even if you don't think you need it.
- When using the stylus, you do not need to grip it tightly or press it hard against the screen. Doing so may cause fatigue or discomfort.
- If your hands, wrists, arms or eyes become tired or sore while playing, stop and rest them for several hours before playing again.
- If you continue to have sore hands, wrists, arms or eyes during or after play, stop playing and see a doctor.

⚠ WARNING - Battery Leakage

The Nintendo DS contains a rechargeable lithium ion battery pack. Leakage of ingredients contained within the battery pack, or the combustion products of the ingredients, can cause personal injury as well as damage to your Nintendo DS.

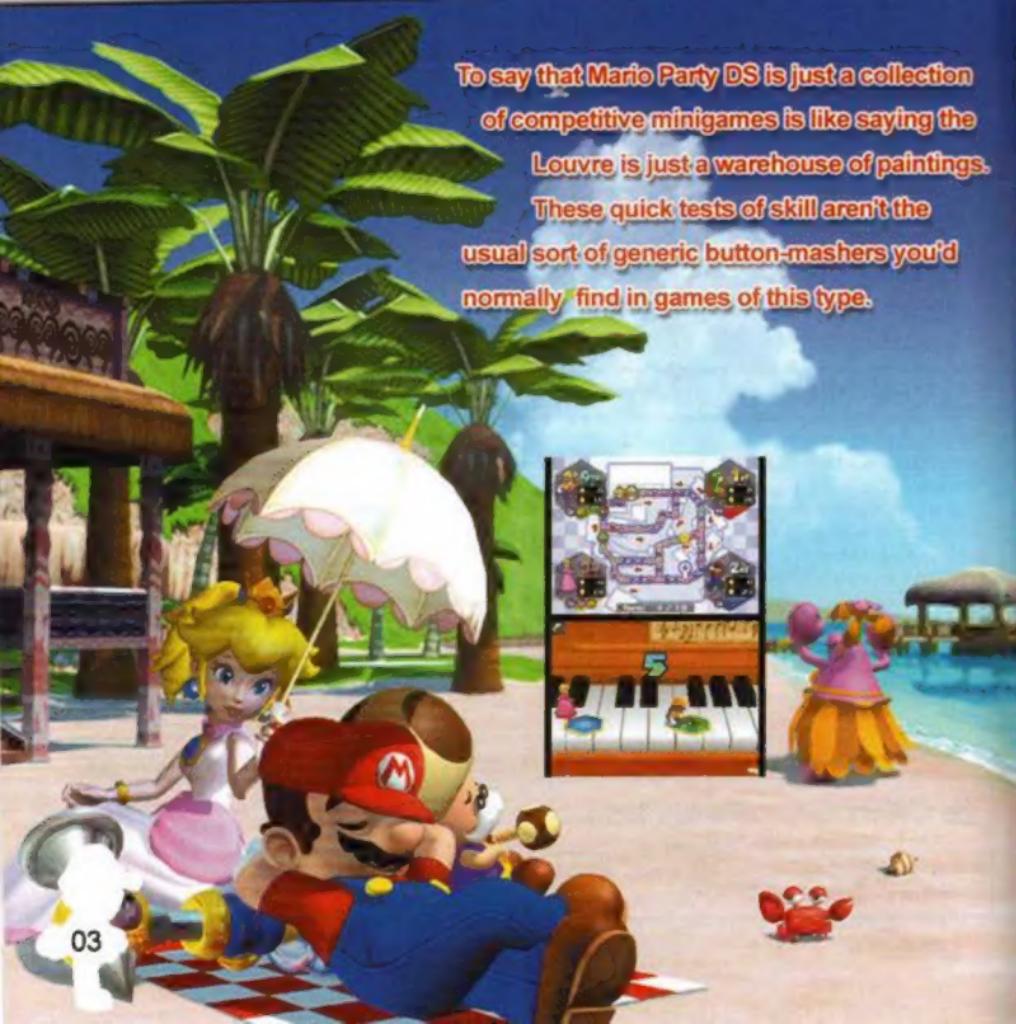
If battery leakage occurs, avoid contact with skin. If contact occurs, immediately wash thoroughly with soap and water. If liquid leaking from a battery pack comes into contact with your eyes, immediately flush thoroughly with water and see a doctor.

To avoid battery leakage:

- Do not expose battery to excessive physical shock, vibration, or liquids.
- Do not disassemble, attempt to repair or deform the battery.
- Do not dispose of battery pack in a fire.
- Do not touch the terminals of the battery, or cause a short between the terminals with a metal object.
- Do not peel or damage the battery label.

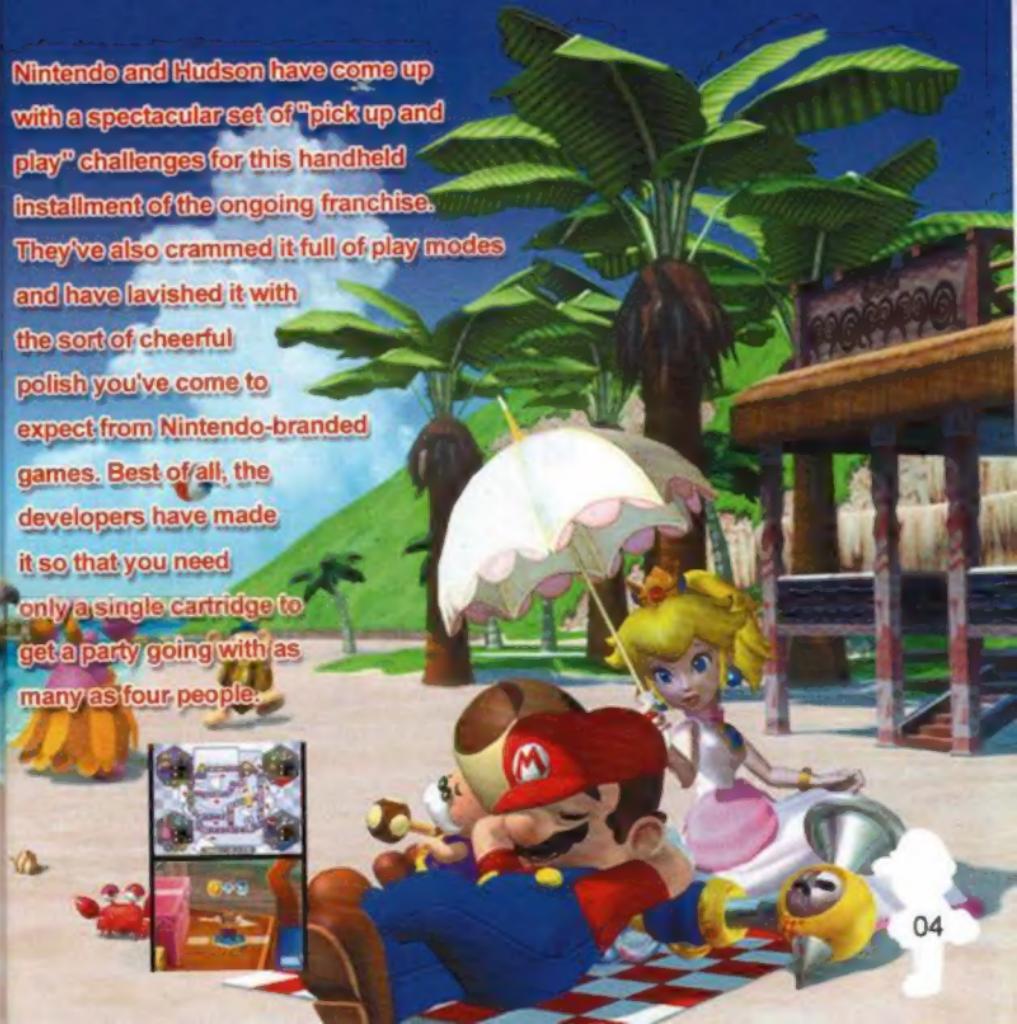
⚠ CAUTION - Stylus Use

To avoid fatigue and discomfort when using the stylus, do not grip it tightly or press it hard against the screen. Keep your fingers, hand, wrist and arm relaxed. Long, steady, gentle strokes work just as well as many short, hard strokes.



To say that *Mario Party DS* is just a collection of competitive minigames is like saying the Louvre is just a warehouse of paintings. These quick tests of skill aren't the usual sort of generic button-mashers you'd normally find in games of this type.

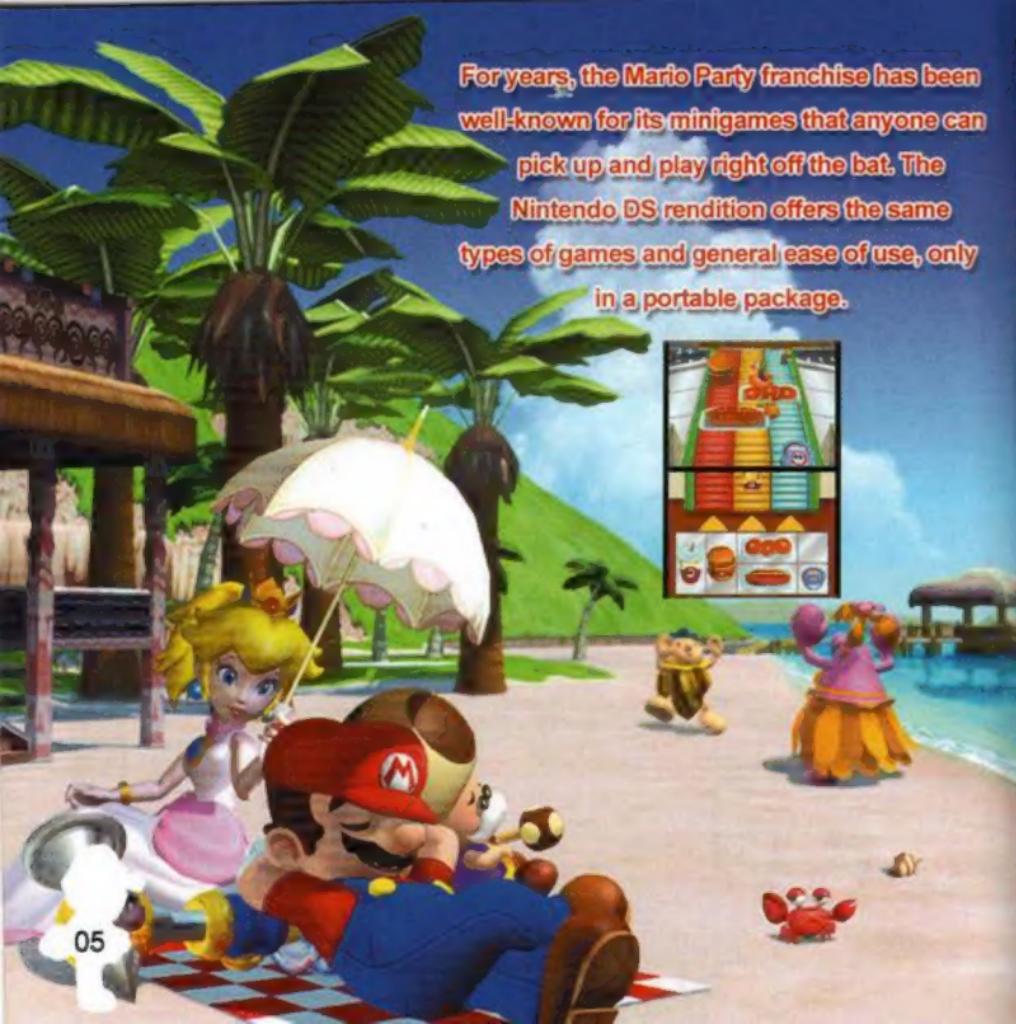
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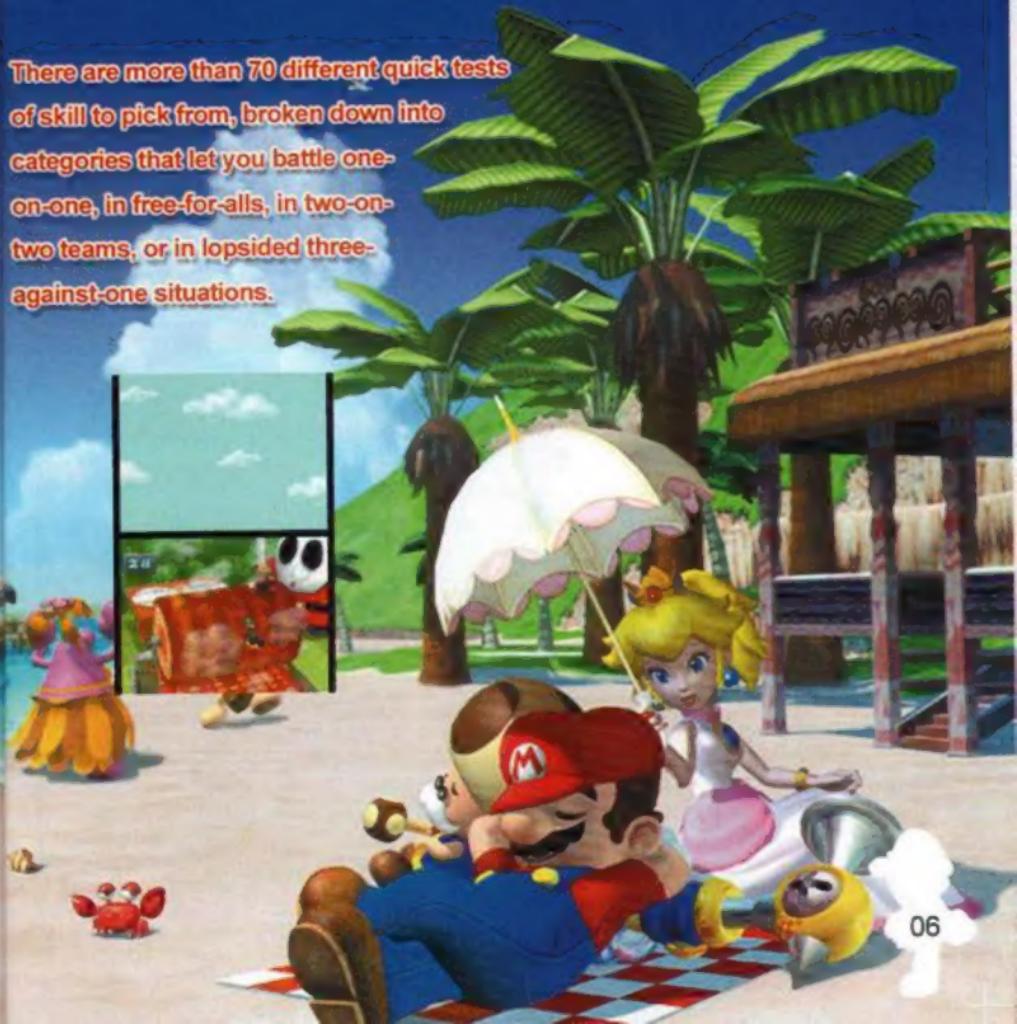
Nintendo and Hudson have come up with a spectacular set of "pick up and play" challenges for this handheld installment of the ongoing franchise. They've also crammed it full of play modes and have lavished it with the sort of cheerful polish you've come to expect from Nintendo-branded games. Best of all, the developers have made it so that you need only a single cartridge to get a party going with as many as four people:



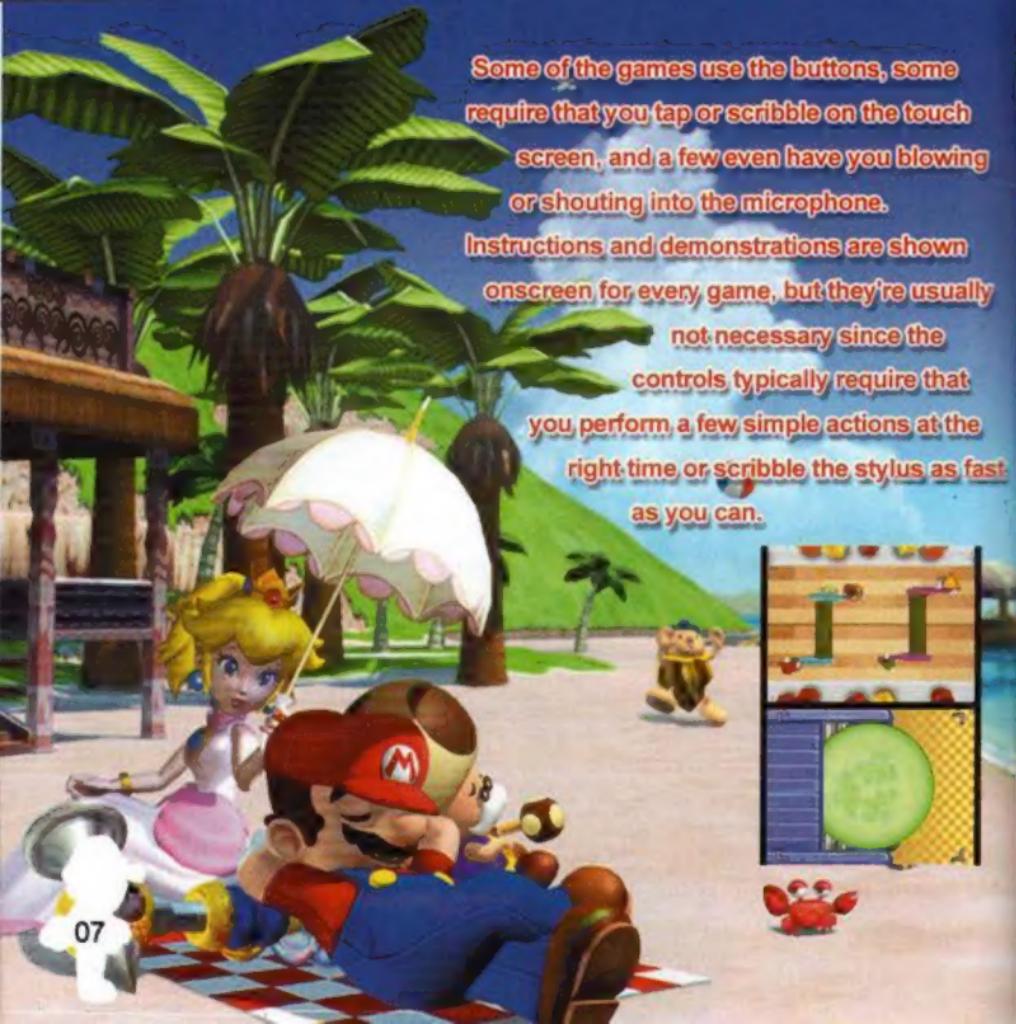
04



For years, the Mario Party franchise has been well-known for its minigames that anyone can pick up and play right off the bat. The Nintendo DS rendition offers the same types of games and general ease of use, only in a portable package.

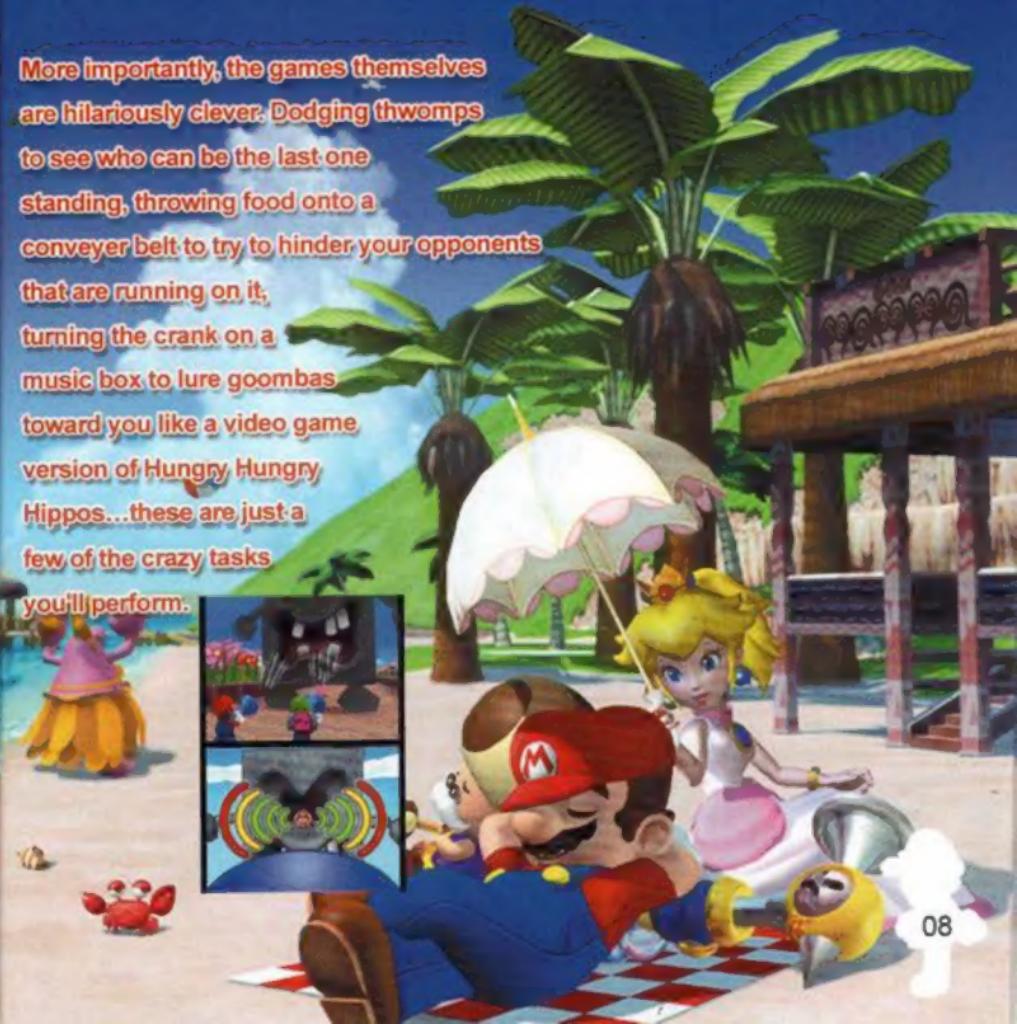


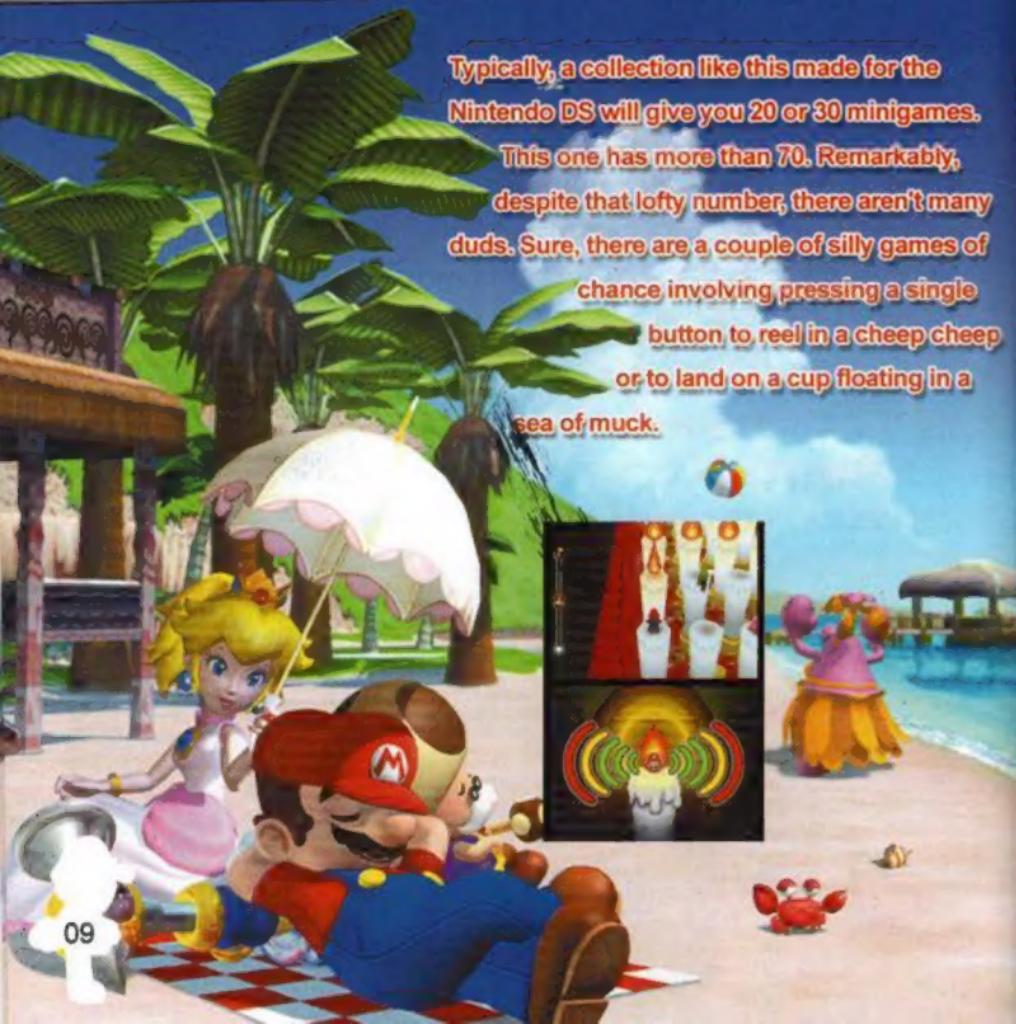
There are more than 70 different quick tests of skill to pick from, broken down into categories that let you battle one-on-one, in free-for-all, in two-on-two teams, or in lopsided three-against-one situations.



Some of the games use the buttons, some require that you tap or scribble on the touch screen, and a few even have you blowing or shouting into the microphone. Instructions and demonstrations are shown onscreen for every game, but they're usually not necessary since the controls typically require that you perform a few simple actions at the right time or scribble the stylus as fast as you can.

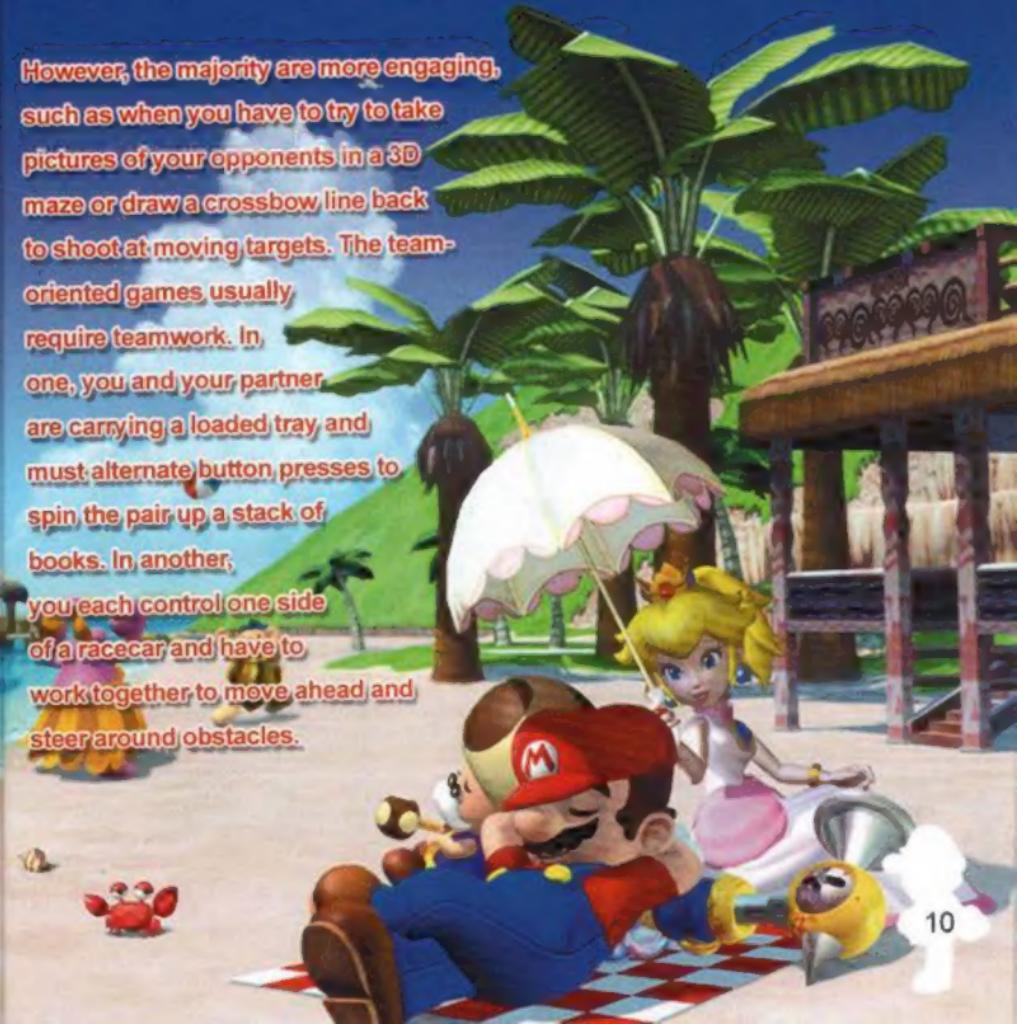
More importantly, the games themselves are hilariously clever: Dodging thwomps to see who can be the last one standing, throwing food onto a conveyer belt to try to hinder your opponents that are running on it, turning the crank on a music box to lure goombas toward you like a video game version of Hungry Hungry Hippos...these are just a few of the crazy tasks you'll perform.

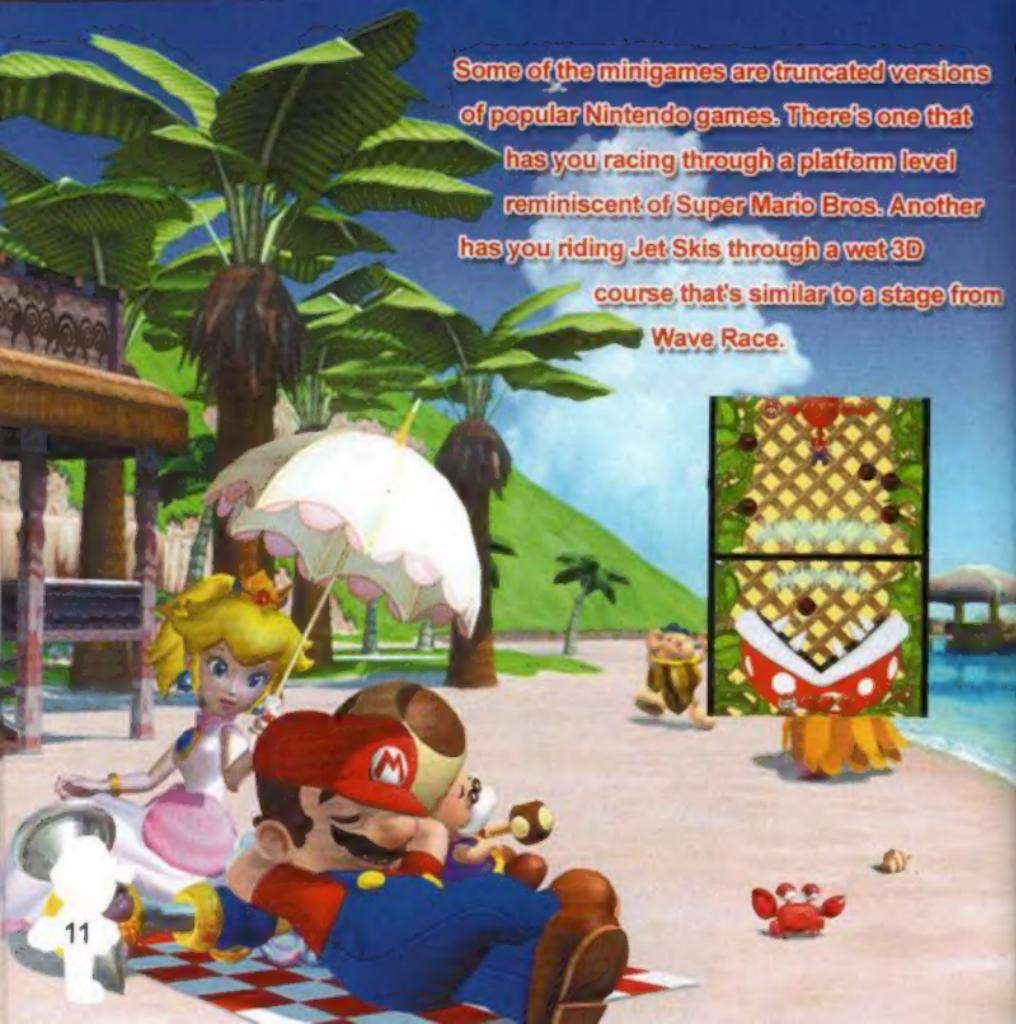




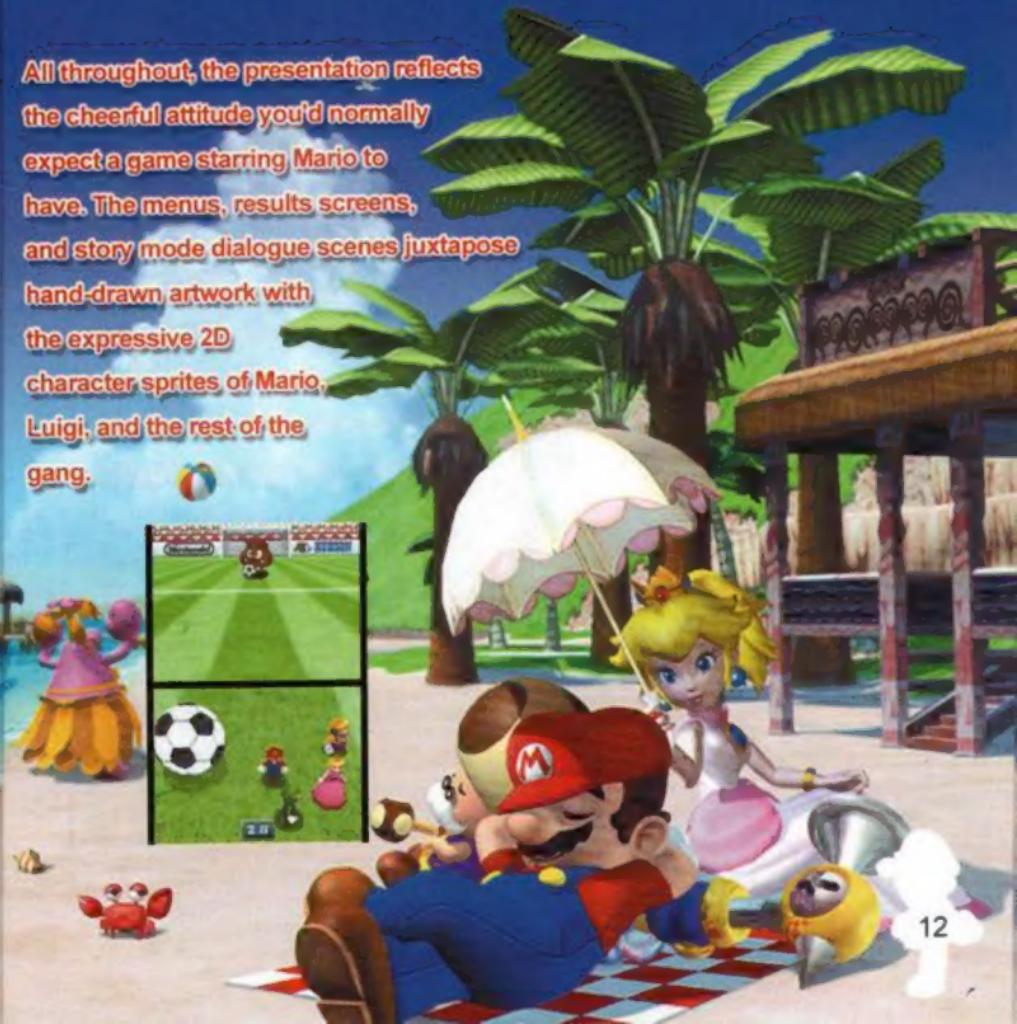
Typically, a collection like this made for the Nintendo DS will give you 20 or 30 minigames. This one has more than 70. Remarkably, despite that lofty number, there aren't many duds. Sure, there are a couple of silly games of chance involving pressing a single button to reel in a cheep cheep or to land on a cup floating in a sea of muck.

However, the majority are more engaging, such as when you have to try to take pictures of your opponents in a 3D maze or draw a crossbow line back to shoot at moving targets. The team-oriented games usually require teamwork. In one, you and your partner are carrying a loaded tray, and must alternate button presses to spin the pair up a stack of books. In another, you each control one side of a racecar and have to work together to move ahead and steer around obstacles.





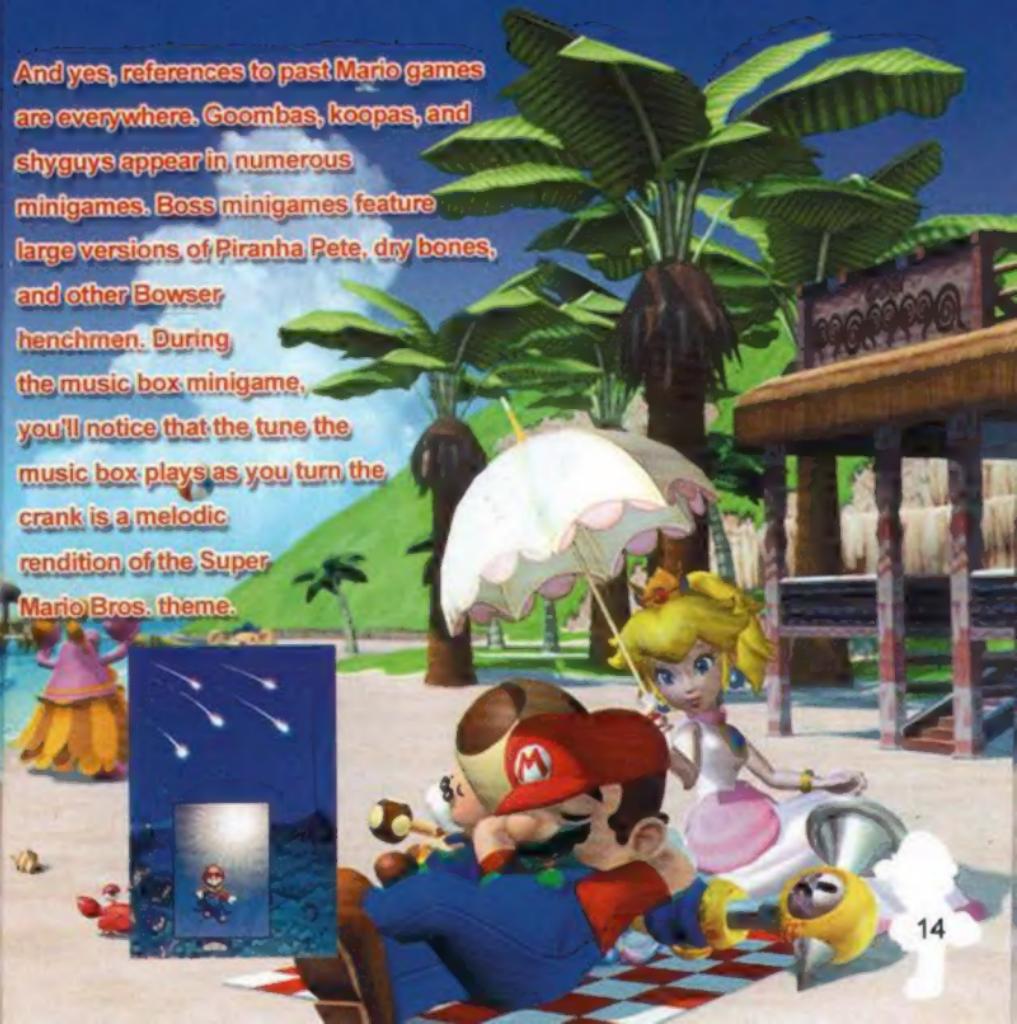
Some of the minigames are truncated versions of popular Nintendo games. There's one that has you racing through a platform level reminiscent of Super Mario Bros. Another has you riding Jet Skis through a wet 3D course that's similar to a stage from Wave Race.



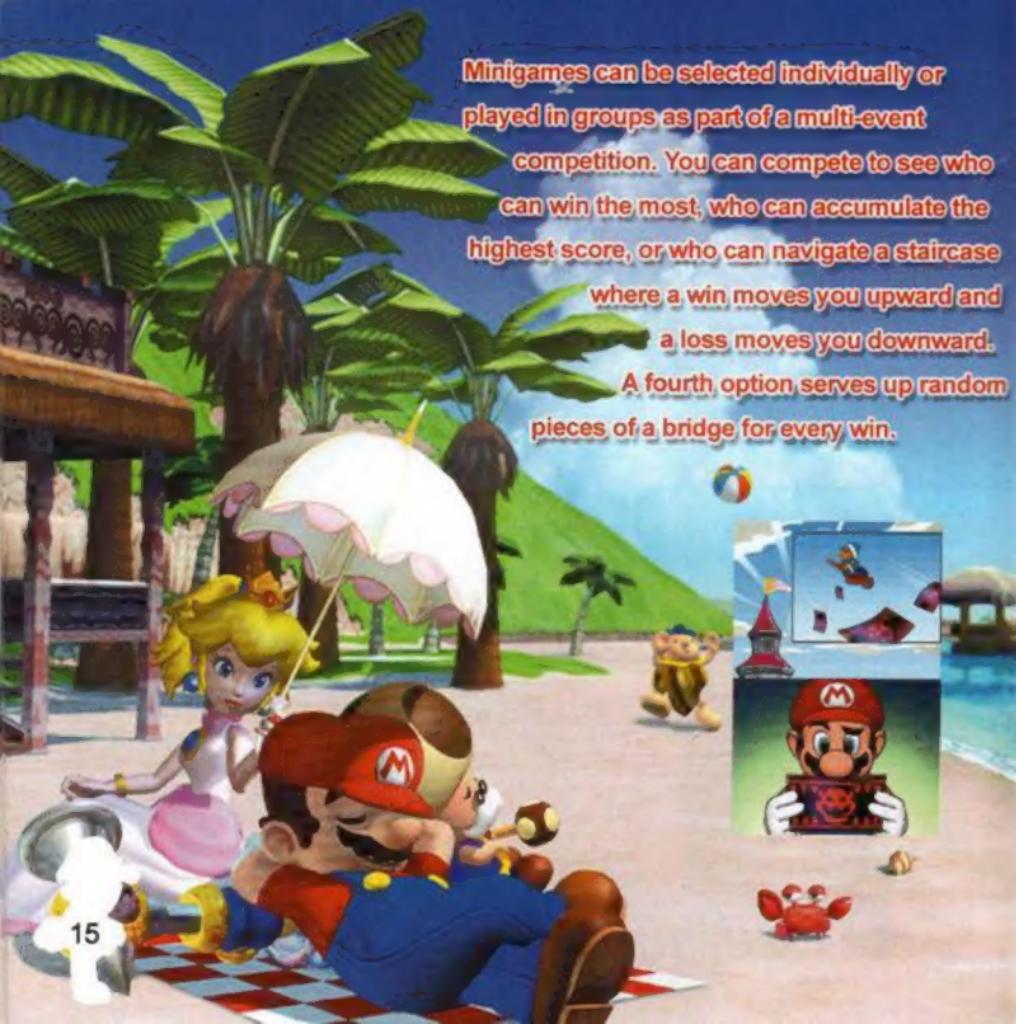
All throughout, the presentation reflects the cheerful attitude you'd normally expect a game starring Mario to have. The menus, results screens, and story mode dialogue scenes juxtapose hand-drawn artwork with the expressive 2D character sprites of Mario, Luigi, and the rest of the gang.



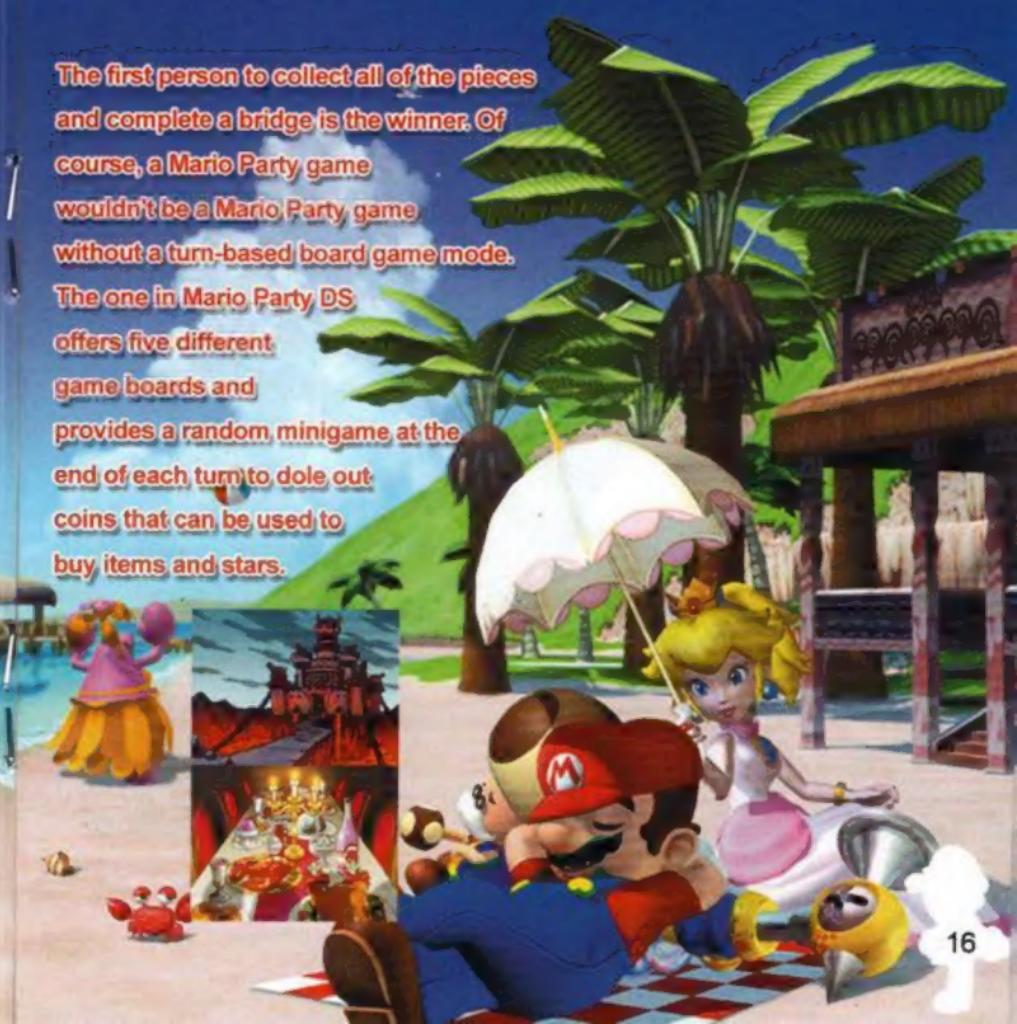
The rich stereophonic music will make you want to keep the volume turned up, and so will the goofy character voices, assuming you're not against Nintendo characters verbalizing their joy. While a few of the minigames are put together with flat 2D backgrounds and simple character sprites, the majority employ multilayered 2D artwork or detailed 3D settings and characters.



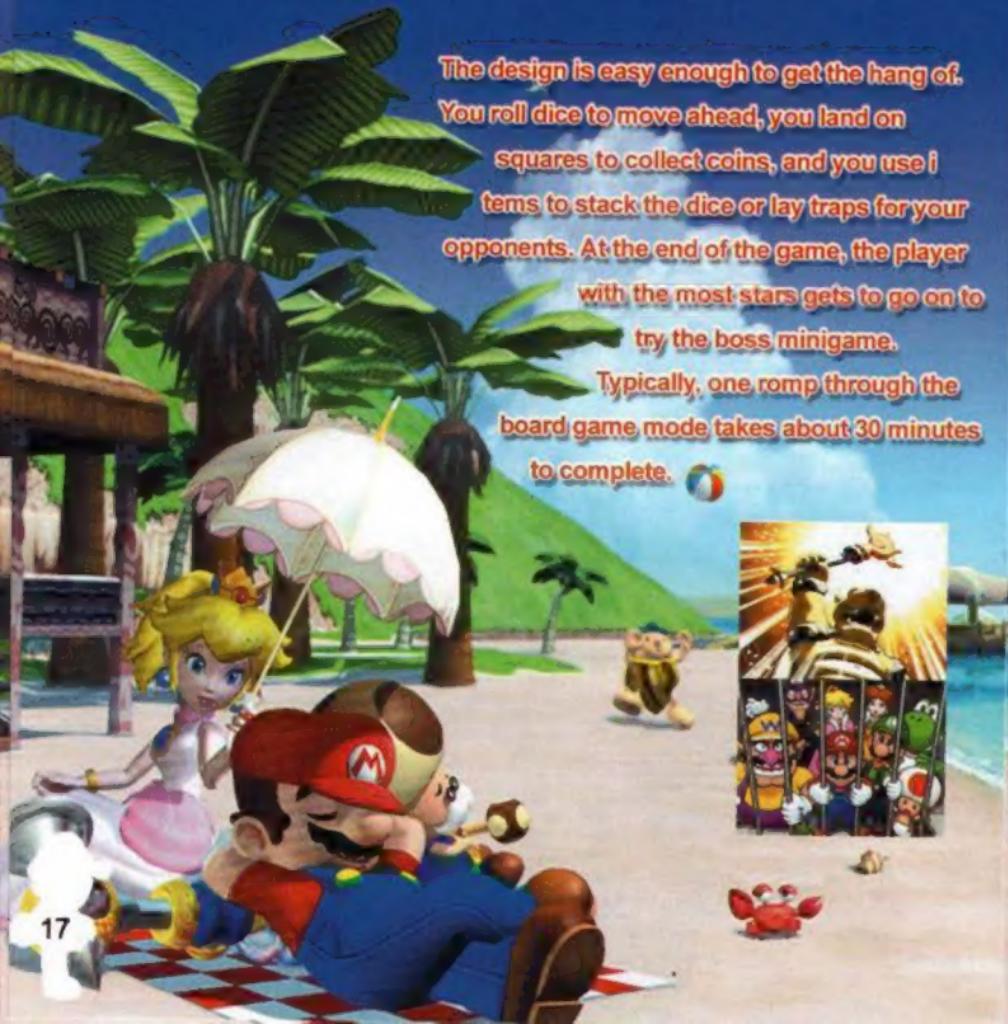
And yes, references to past Mario games are everywhere. Goombas, koopas, and shyguys appear in numerous minigames. Boss minigames feature large versions of Piranha Pete, dry bones, and other Bowser henchmen. During the music box minigame, you'll notice that the tune the music box plays as you turn the crank is a melodic rendition of the Super Mario Bros. theme.



Minigames can be selected individually or played in groups as part of a multi-event competition. You can compete to see who can win the most, who can accumulate the highest score, or who can navigate a staircase where a win moves you upward and a loss moves you downward. A fourth option serves up random pieces of a bridge for every win.

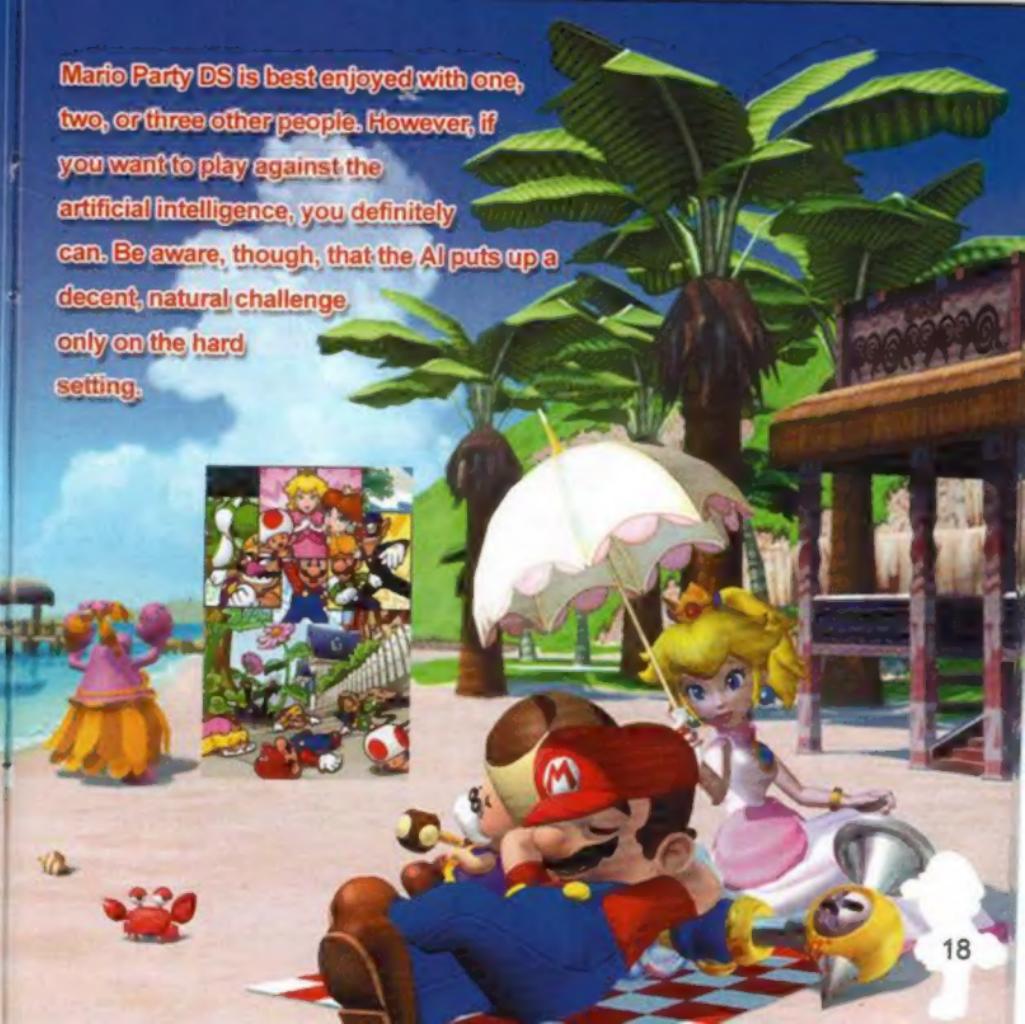


The first person to collect all of the pieces and complete a bridge is the winner. Of course, a Mario Party game wouldn't be a Mario Party game without a turn-based board game mode. The one in Mario Party DS offers five different game boards and provides a random minigame at the end of each turn to dole out coins that can be used to buy items and stars.



The design is easy enough to get the hang of. You roll dice to move ahead, you land on squares to collect coins, and you use items to stack the dice or lay traps for your opponents. At the end of the game, the player with the most stars gets to go on to try the boss minigame. Typically, one romp through the board game mode takes about 30 minutes to complete.

Mario Party DS is best enjoyed with one, two, or three other people. However, if you want to play against the artificial intelligence, you definitely can. Be aware, though, that the AI puts up a decent, natural challenge only on the hard setting.



On the easy and normal settings, the AI is... **genius**, and on the expert setting you will **almost never beat it**. Still, it's impressive how much **intelligence** Mario has in his brain, and his uncanny ability to **memorize shapes** and **know exactly where hazards** will appear. For solo play, the boardgame also includes a **story mode** that organizes the five boardgame stages into a **quest** of sorts.

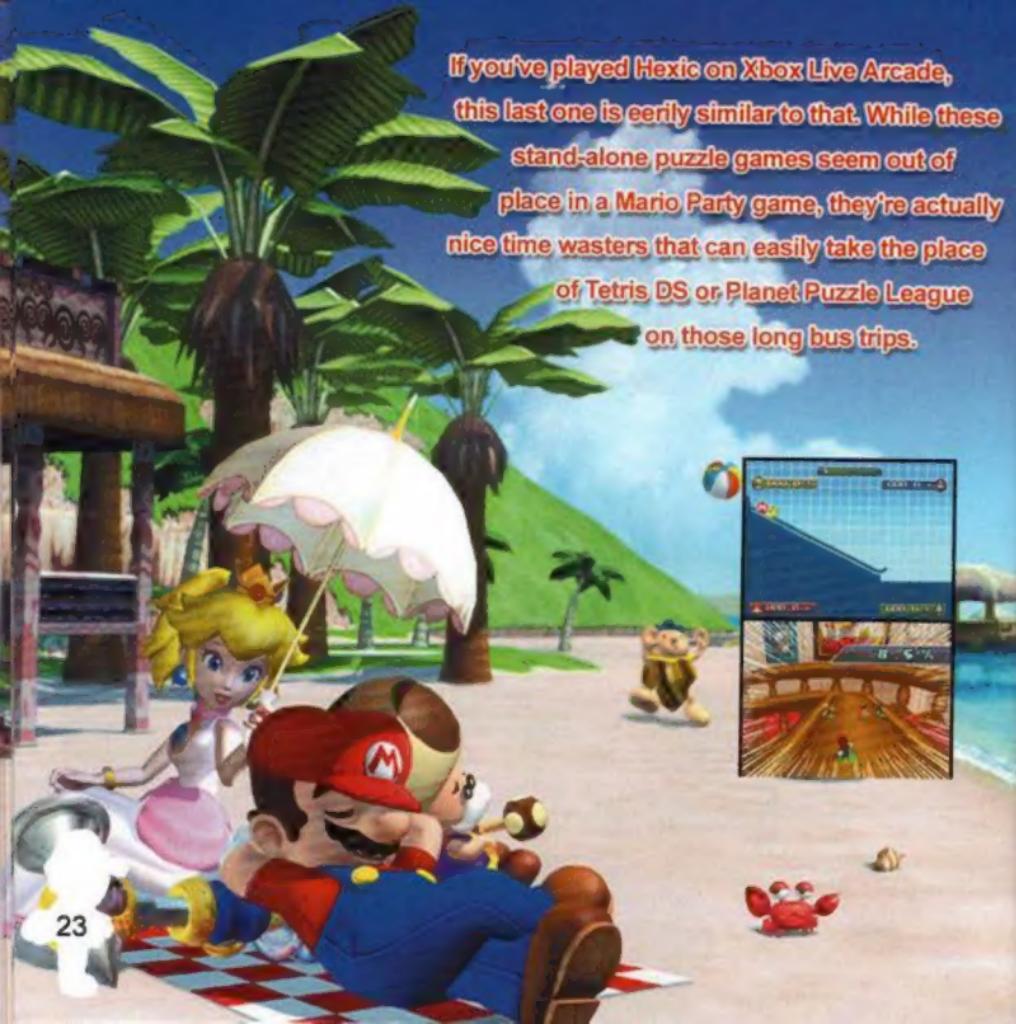


As the story goes, Bowser has kidnapped Mario and Luigi using his **minion army**, and as they you have to **pick** characters to work through Bowser's **minions** by beating the **different boards**. Progress is **saved** after every turn, and at the end of each board, which means you can easily **take a break and resume the quest later**. If you lose, you **don't have to replay** the boards you've already won; you do have to replay the current board though, which is a bit of a bummer.

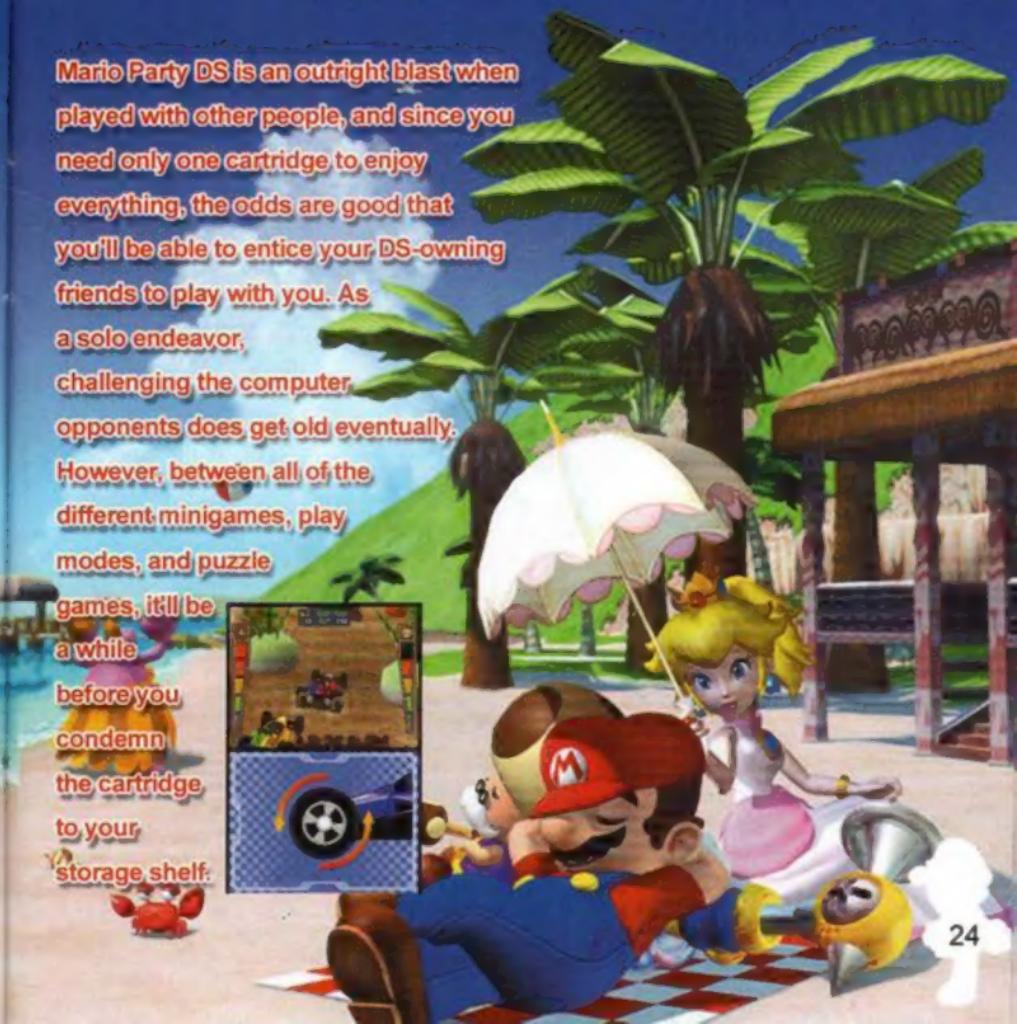


However, if you get tired of the traditional minigames and the story mode, the cartridge also offers six different mini-games. These include puzzle games. Three of them are based on Panel de Pon—with minor changes to protect the guilty.

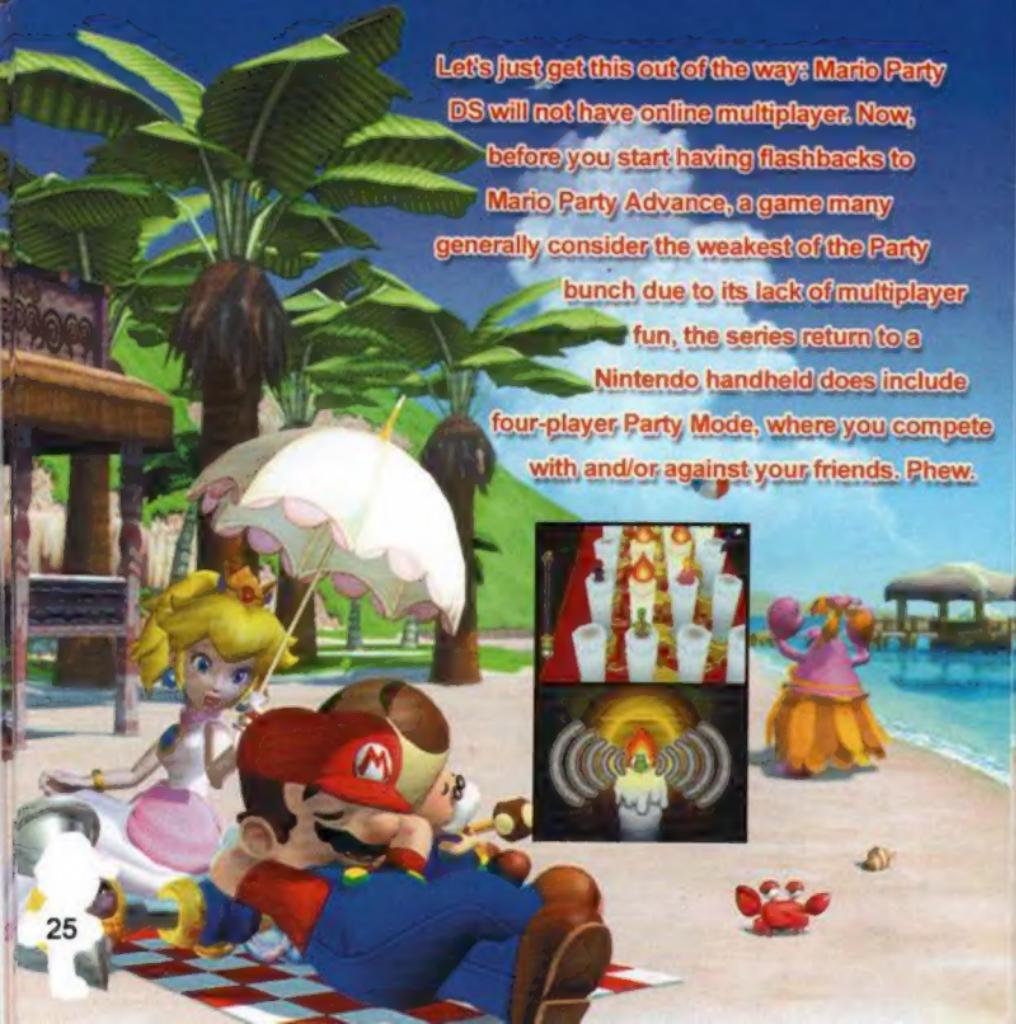
The other three, one involves rotating a cylinder to catch and match marbles, another involves grabbing pieces off of a board to fill in a rectangle, and the last involves rotating a pyramid matching like-colored groups of triangles in a never-ending cluster of triangles.



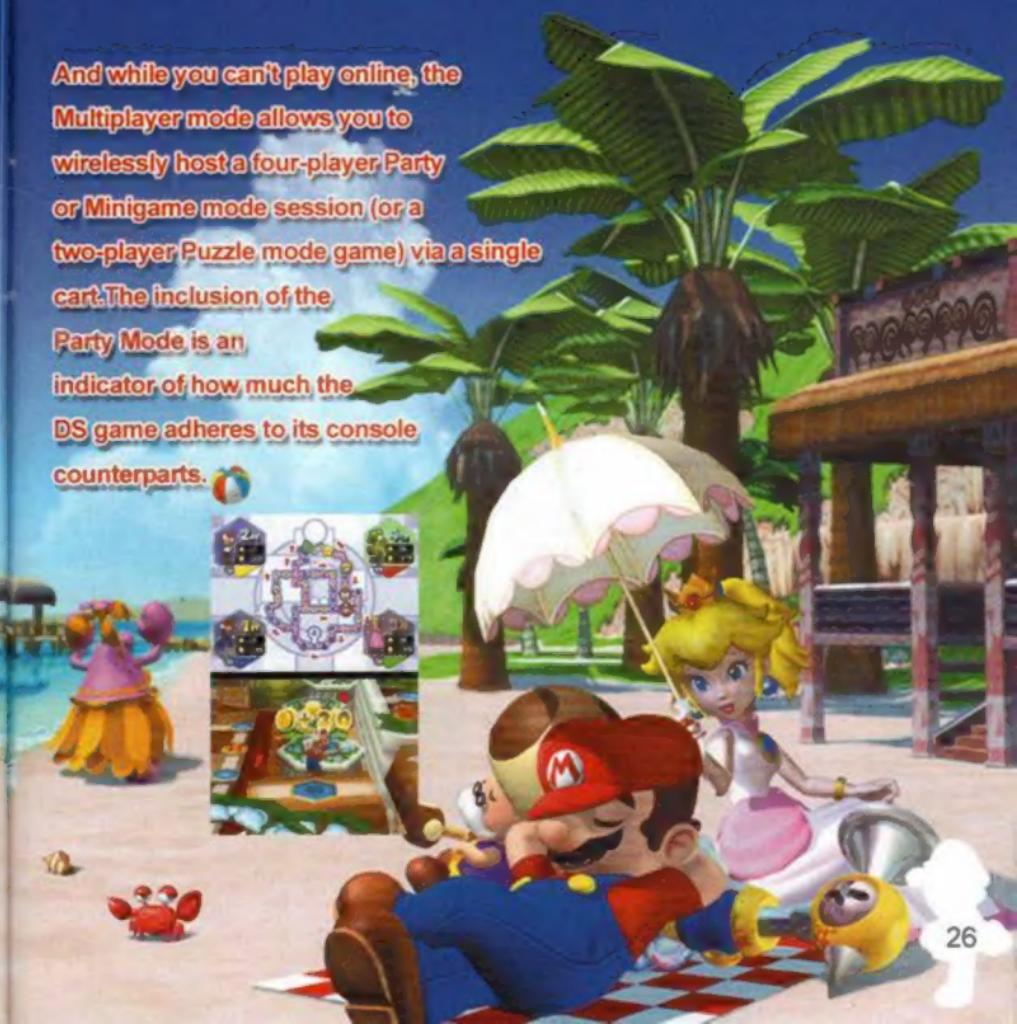
If you've played Hexic on Xbox Live Arcade, this last one is eerily similar to that. While these stand-alone puzzle games seem out of place in a Mario Party game, they're actually nice time wasters that can easily take the place of Tetris DS or Planet Puzzle League on those long bus trips.



Mario Party DS is an outright blast when played with other people, and since you need only one cartridge to enjoy everything, the odds are good that you'll be able to entice your DS-owning friends to play with you. As a solo endeavor, challenging the computer opponents does get old eventually. However, between all of the different minigames, play modes, and puzzle games, it'll be a while before you condemn the cartridge to your storage shelf.

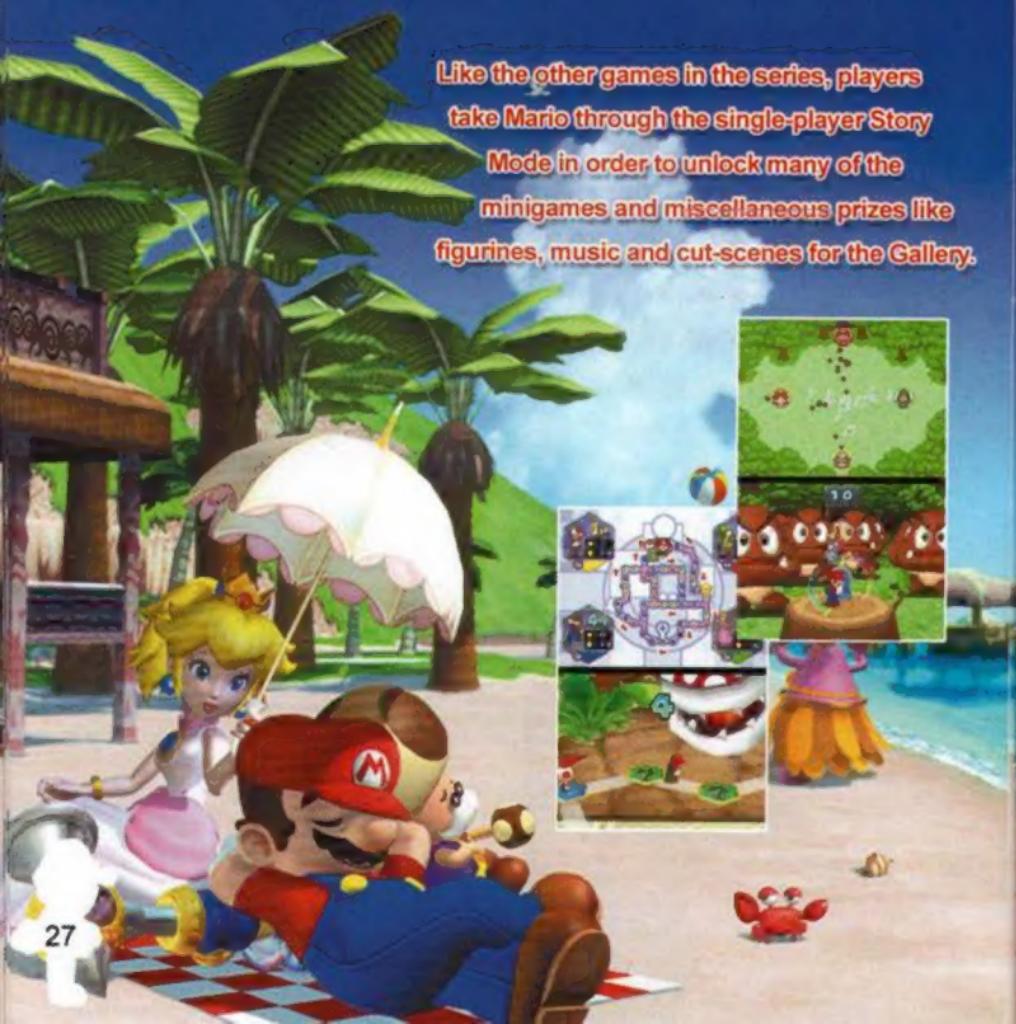


Let's just get this out of the way: Mario Party DS will not have online multiplayer. Now, before you start having flashbacks to Mario Party Advance, a game many generally consider the weakest of the Party bunch due to its lack of multiplayer fun, the series return to a Nintendo handheld does include four-player Party Mode, where you compete with, and/or against your friends. Phew.

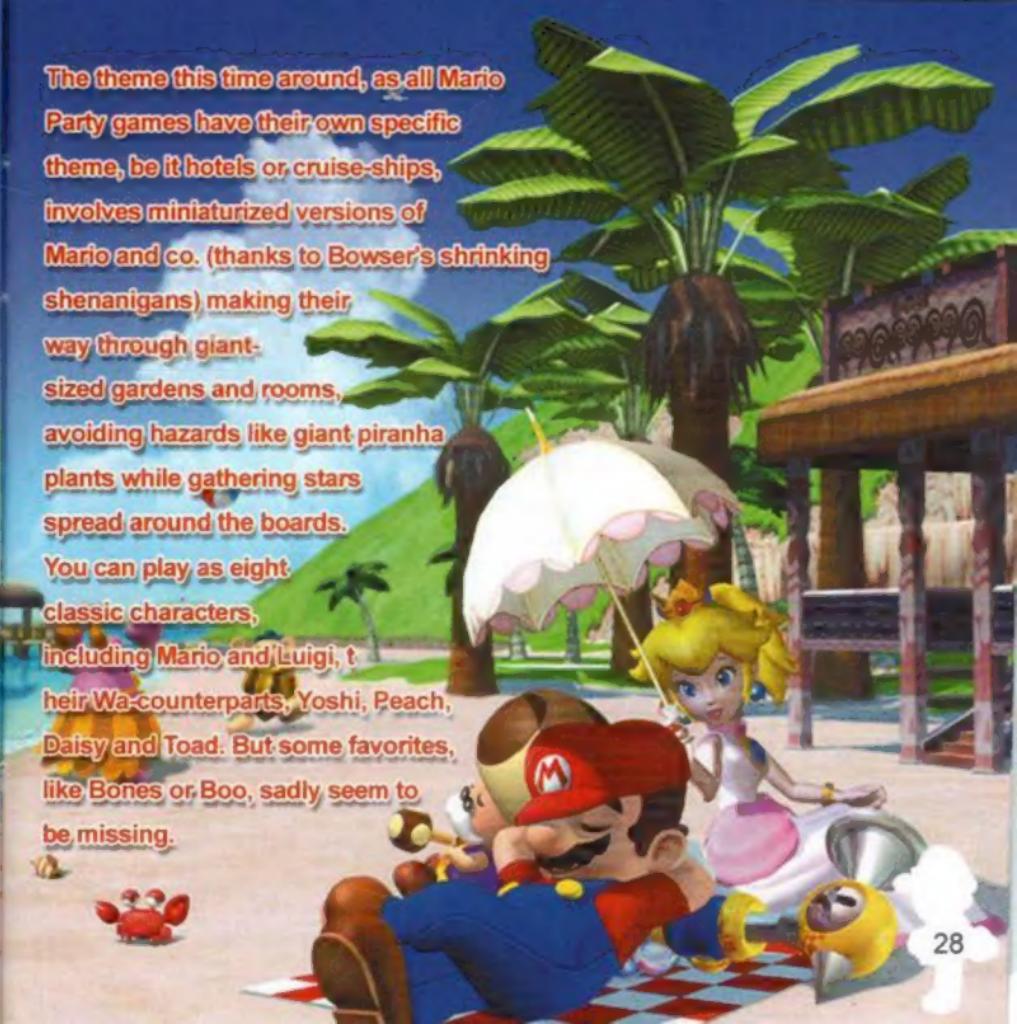


And while you can't play online, the Multiplayer mode allows you to wirelessly host a four-player Party or Minigame mode session (or a two-player Puzzle mode game) via a single cart. The inclusion of the Party Mode is an indicator of how much the DS game adheres to its console counterparts.

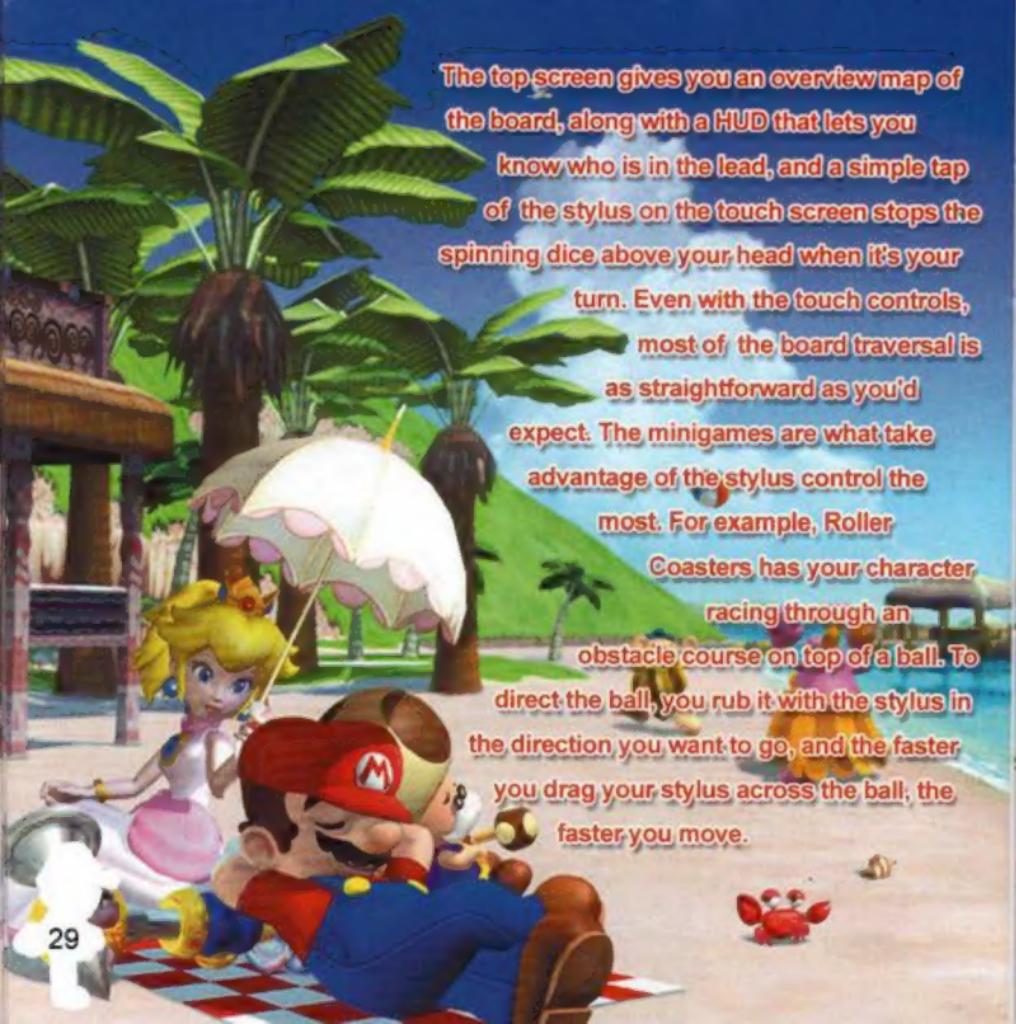




Like the other games in the series, players take Mario through the single-player Story Mode in order to unlock many of the minigames and miscellaneous prizes like figurines, music and cut-scenes for the Gallery.



The theme this time around, as all Mario Party games have their own specific theme, be it hotels or cruise-ships, involves miniaturized versions of Mario and co. (thanks to Bowser's shrinking shenanigans) making their way through giant-sized gardens and rooms, avoiding hazards like giant piranha plants while gathering stars spread around the boards. You can play as eight classic characters, including Mario and Luigi, their Wa-counterparts, Yoshi, Peach, Daisy and Toad. But some favorites, like Bones or Boo, sadly seem to be missing.



The top screen gives you an overview map of the board, along with a HUD that lets you know who is in the lead, and a simple tap of the stylus on the touch screen stops the spinning dice above your head when it's your turn. Even with the touch controls, most of the board traversal is as straightforward as you'd expect. The minigames are what take advantage of the stylus control the most. For example, Roller Coasters has your character racing through an obstacle course on top of a ball. To direct the ball, you rub it with the stylus in the direction you want to go, and the faster you drag your stylus across the ball, the faster you move.

But not all minigames make use of the touch screen; some, like Dust Buddies – a tiny-take on the familiar "run away from the large hazard-machine behind you while dodging stuff in front of you" minigames from other Mario Party games – which uses the D-pad for movement and the A button for jumping. From what we've seen so far, there seems to be a good mix of games that use the touch screen, classic button controls, and even the mic. While not exactly fresh and new, for its second try at handhelds, Mario Party DS seems to have made the transition without losing that which makes the series popular.